

"All Old Testament on me!" - Week 75

I happened to hear an interesting throwaway comment on the radio the other week. I cannot remember the programme, the speaker, or the subject, but I do remember what the man said.

He was speaking of his mother, and of some incident in his family from years past. As he was recounting his story, he just said in passing, " ... and she went all Old Testament on me!". That was it. That was all there was to it, and he quickly carried on with what he was saying.

Now that short comment intrigued me because of what lies behind it: ".... all Old Testament on me! ..." is a very unusual thing for someone to say these days.

First, it shows a consciousness of the Bible - sadly, also unusual these days. This man, perhaps when he was lad of years ago, obviously came across Bible teaching in some shape or form, perhaps through Sunday School, or through "Scripture lessons" and assemblies at school. Perhaps little of this teaching had "stuck", but some of it had. Somewhere in his system were implanted notions of a strict God, right and wrong, discipline, accountability and punishment.

Second, his comment reflects an assumption still around today, that the God of the Old Testament is nasty and severe, compared with the God of the New Testament who is gentle and kind. Perhaps the man on that programme might just as easily have said, when his mother had been kind one time, "Oh, she went all New Testament on me"!

Is there a difference in character between the God revealed to us in each of the two Testaments of the Holy Bible?

The answer to that question is No, no difference at all in His divine character. But what we do see is *a difference of emphasis* within His single divine character.

So in each Testament God reveals Himself to us in particular ways, with some aspects of His Being receiving greater prominence than others.

In the Old Testament we are told that He is our Creator, the one true God, yet at the same time somehow having relationship within Himself, by the use in the Hebrew of the plural word for "God", "Elohim". He creates the world, with Adam and Eve set as its stewards. He promises hope and redemption when they fall and foul up His perfect creation so dreadfully. He judges the world for its wickedness by the Flood, yet saves the few who are righteous. He chooses Abram, and builds His chosen people the Jews.

He then rescues them from Egypt and leads them into the long-promised land. Along the way He shows them Himself - His holiness, His faithfulness, His justice, His mercy, and His steadfast love for them. They learn of Him through the tabernacle, the land, the law, the monarchy, the temple, the prophets, the exile, and the restoration; and throughout all those learnings always there runs the

deep, constant hope of Messiah! What a truly wonderful God is revealed to us in the Old Testament!

And this is precisely the same God who is revealed to us in the New Testament. But in this Testament the emphasis can be changed, for now Messiah is come!

No wonder then the focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself - one of us, God made flesh, living in our midst, sinless, glorious, righteous, holy and good! Our precious Lord speaks constantly of God - the God made known to us in the Old Testament - as being "Abba", our Father. He always has been just that - not a breath of a change of character here between the two Testaments - but now this wonderful characteristic of divine fatherhood can be seen and experienced so much more vividly than before.

Now, that fatherhood extends far beyond the Jews themselves - all of us are called, and can be drawn into the fellowship of the Elohim Godhead by simple faith in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus.

But we notice also in the pages of the New Testament there are still many references concerning the holiness of God the Father, backed up by the promise of His future judgement on those who insist on defiance; and the main speaker in these terms is the Lord Jesus Himself. These references about judgement are easy to overlook in the midst of all the Good News, but they are all still there, quietly demonstrating, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear, that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is one and the same.

So whether that man's mother went "all Old Testament" or "all New Testament" on her son makes not a scrap of difference! He is the God of us all, fully revealed to us across the pages of the two Testaments of His Holy Bible.

How blessed we all are, to be in the hands of such a God.

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